

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA TREATMENT OF CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
SITUATION

1. VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDISTS SHOW SIGNS OF BEING CAUGHT FLAT-FOOTED BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THE GVN WITHDRAWAL AND THE SCALE OF THE CIVILIAN EVACUATION FROM THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS FOLLOWING THE FALL OF BAN ME THUOT. GEARED UP FOR A PROPAGANDA BLITZ EMPHASIZING THEIR LINE THAT "THE PEOPLE" WERE "RISING UP," THE COMMUNISTS HAVE SHOWN PARTICULAR FRUSTRATION AT THE PROPORTIONS OF THE CIVILIAN EVACUATION. RATIONALIZING THIS, LIBERATION RADIO CONTENTED MARCH 19 THAT THE GVN HAD MOUNTED A "LARGE-SCALE CAMPAIGN TO FORCE THE PEOPLE TO FLEE WITH IT" AND WAS OTHERWISE FOLLOWING A SCORCHED-EARTH POLICY IN THE HIGHLANDS. THE REFUGEES, IT CLAIMED, WERE BEING USED AS A SHIELD TO PARRY THE PUNITIVE BLOWS OF THE MASSES WHO ARE RISING UP AND THE LIBERATION ARMED FORCES" AND ALSO AS A SOURCE OF DRAFTEES AND MONEY. CONSEQUENTLY, THE BROADCAST CONCLUDED, "THE LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE NO OTHER PATH THAN TO RISE UP TO STRUGGLE AGAINST AND PUNISH THIEU'S
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REMNANT TROOPS WHO ARE TERRORIZING AND CONTROLLING THE INNO-

CENT PEOPLE," THUS IMPLYING THAT THEY MIGHT HARRASS THE REFUGEES ALONG EVACUATION ROUTES. IN A REBROADCAST OF THE SAME ITEM A FEW HOURS LATER, LIB RADIO TACKED ON A PLEA FOR RESIDENTS TO "STAY CLOSE TO YOUR LAND, YOUR VILLAGES AND YOUR CITIES AND BUILD A NEW LIFE." WHILE UNCHARACTERISTICALLY ADMITTING THAT EVEN "IN THOSE AREAS WHICH HAVE BEEN LIBERATED FOR A LONG TIME AS WELL AS IN NEWLY RECOVERED AREAS... NUMEROUS DIFFICULTIES AND HARDSHIPS STILL EXIST." IT CLAIMED THAT THE PEOPLE ARE "LIVING IN MUTUAL LOVE AND SUPPORT."

2. ALONG THE SAME LINES, LIB RADIO ON MARCH 17 BROADCAST A SOOTHING COMMENTARY TO NERVOUS "PEOPLE IN THE RECENTLY LIBERATED AREAS" WHO "HAVE NOT YET HAD MANY CHANCES TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES." PRAISING "THE PLAF'S SPIRIT OF STRICTLY ENFORCING DISCIPLINE AND ... FINE REVOLUTIONARY NATURE," THE COMMENTARY CONTENDED THAT "ONLY A FEW DAYS AFTER OUR TROOPS HAVE OCCUPIED RECENTLY RECOVERED AREAS,...THEY ARE TRUSTED, LOVED AND WHOLEHEARTEDLY ASSISTED BY THE COMPATRIOTS."

3. LIB RADIO HAS BEEN OBLIGED SIMPLY TO COMMENT ON SAIGON PRESS ACCOUNTS OF THE GVN'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE HIGHLANDS, RELYING PRINCIPALLY ON SELECTED, VERY GRAPHIC REPORTS FROM PLEIKU IN THE RESPECTED OPPOSITION DAILY CHINH LUAN. LIB RADIO PREDICTABLY CONCLUDED THAT "THE THIEU CLIQUE HAS BECOME CONFUSED, DEMORALIZED AND IS IN DISARRAY," AND URGED "SAIGON OFFICERS AND MEN" TO "DESERT AND RETURN TO THEIR FAMILIES AND NATIVE LAND."

4. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE APPARENTLY MADE SPEEDY EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR HOLD ON BAN ME THUOT. THEY CLAIM THAT THEIR FORCES HAD GAINED "COMPLETE CONTROL" OF BAN ME THUOT BY THE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 11. LIB RADIO, IN ANNOUNCING THIS ON MARCH 14, ASSERTED THAT "THE PATRIOTIC FORCES IN DARLAC ARE TRACKING DOWN AND CALLING ON THE ENEMY REMNANTS TO SURRENDER. MANY SAIGON TROOPS HAVE CROSSED OVER TO THE PATRIOTS' SIDE." LIB RADIO ON MARCH 16 SAID THAT THE INHABITANTS OF BAN ME THUOT HAD "JOINED THE PLAF" IN "SEARCHING FOR THE WICKED AND STUBBORN PUPPET SPIES AND OFFICIALS," SUGGESTING THAT THE ANTICIPATED ROUNDUP AND ARREST OF GVN UNCLASSIFIED

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OFFICIALS AND OTHER INCORRIGIBLES HAS BEGUN. THE BROADCAST CLAIMED THAT PUBLIC ORDER HAD BEEN "RAPIDLY STABILIZED" AND THAT BAN ME THUOT RESIDENTS "ENTHUSIASTICALLY HELD MEETINGS" ON SUBSEQUENT DAYS TO CELEBRATE THE "COMPLETE LIBERATION" OF THE CITY.

5. INITIAL EFFORTS TO REORGANIZE THE POPULATION OF BAN ME THUOT HAVE ALSO BEGUN. ON MARCH 16, A MEMBER OF THE STANDING

COMMITTEE OF THE "PRG REPRESENTATION" IN CENTRAL TRUNG BO MET WITH "CHIEFS AND DEPUTY CHIEFS OF PROVINCIAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES" AND SOME 200 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS. HE REPORTEDLY SET FORTH THE "PRG'S 10-POINT POLICY REGARDING THE LIBERATED AREAS" AND THE POLICY TOWARD TEACHERS WHO "FORMERLY" TAUGHT IN GVN-CONTROLLED AREAS. AN ALLEGED "REPRESENTATIVE" OF THE TEACHERS "EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE TO QUICKLY BECOME A TEACHER IN THE LIBERATED AREAS." ON THE SAME DAY, A VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH VIETNAM LIBERATION FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS MET WITH UNION REPRESENTATIVES IN BAN ME THUOT, WHO "EXPRESSED THEIR DETERMINATION TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE HISTORIC MISSION OF THE WORKING CLASS." THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE COMMUNISTS ARE ATTEMPTING TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR MILITARY SEIZURE OF BAN XE THUOT THROUGH POLITICAL MEANS IS REMINISCENT OF WHAT IS KNOWN OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PHUOC LONG PROVINCIAL CAPITAL IN EARLY JANUARY.
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